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December 20, 2004

Colin Campbell
Superintendent
Padre Island National Seashore
P.O. Box 181300
Corpus Christi, Texas 78480

Dear Mr. Campbell:

First, let me belatedly congratulate you on your appointment as Superintendent of the Padre Island National Seashore, one of the last great coastal wildlands in America. I have heard good things about you from my colleagues in the Sierra Club, and I trust that you will use your leadership to ensure that the natural beauty and ecological importance of Padre Island are not diminished under your tenure.

Greenpeace is very concerned about the proposal to allow additional drilling in the Padre Island National Seashore. After reviewing the Environmental Assessment, we strongly urge you to choose Alternative A, as it is the environmentally preferred alternative.

We also urge you to include a federal buyout of the mineral rights as one of the alternatives. Such an alternative would eliminate the need to allow access to privately owned mineral leases and would be consistent with the NPS environmentally preferred alternative. This would meet all six of the national environmental policy goals and would be consistent with the original intent of the park.

We do not consider the efforts to mitigate drilling impacts on sea turtles to provide sufficient protection, particularly given the level of federal protection mandated by the Endangered Species Act. Even under the best of circumstances, it is rarely possible to identify every nest. It is impossible to predict exactly when and where turtles will nest, or to prevent anthropogenic causes from disturbing either adult turtles or hatchlings. Opening up new areas of Padre Island National Seashore to months of truck traffic and concentrated activity will almost certainly impact turtles, perhaps in ways that may be entirely unexpected. Given how little is understood about turtle nesting behavior and the depletion of suitable nesting habitat, we must adhere to the precautionary principle.

Of further concern is potential impact to seagrass beds, which provide critical nursery habitat for several species of commercial importance. Even if drilling is conducted in such a way as to minimize the actual drilling area, siltation and erosion may impact a much greater area.

As you are well aware, more than a half million people visit Padre Island National Seashore each year. With so much of the Texas coast being used to produce oil and gas, Padre Island is one of the last places in the state, and indeed the country, for people to experience coastal wilderness. The price is simply too high for what would produce at most enough natural gas to meet one day of America's energy needs.

Drilling has no place in Padre Island National Seashore.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of John Hocevar, written in a cursive style.

John Hocevar
Oceans Specialist
(512) 454-6140